

OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

695.9.19.

ASSISTANCE

OF THE

HOLY-SPIRIT.

BY

JOSEPH STOKES, A.M. K

Curate of ALLHALLOWS STEYNING.



LONDON:

Printed for A. WEBLEY, in *Holbourn*, near *Chancery-Lane*; Mess. DODSLEY, *Pall-Mall*; and G. KEITH, in *Gracechurch-Street*.

M DCC. LX.

OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

ASSISTANCE

OF THE

HOLY



LONDON:

Printed by A. MILLAR, in Pall-mall; and by J. JOHNSON, in St. Paul's Church-yard.



THE P R E F A C E.

THERE has been no one Doctrine of our Religion more sadly perverted and abused than the Assistance of the Holy Spirit, though strictly rational in itself, and of the greatest Advantage to Man in his present weak and degenerate State ; yet has it been loaded with so many Absurdities by the Foolishness of Men, as to be a Motive with some for rejecting the Doctrine altogether : for Men are ever fond of running from one Extreme into another.

The Claims of some Persons on this head have run so high, that neither Scripture nor Reason can possibly support them.—And such strange Marks of the Influence of the Holy Spirit have been inculcated, and taught among us, as may serve to oppress the good Christian with the Terrors of Desperation ; and to puff up the Wicked and Prophane with the false Confidence of Presumption.

This is the Article in which the Enthusiast makes his boast ; and by perverting of which,
he

he applies the Sanction of Heaven to every fantastical Notion that comes into his Head ; recommending it as a Dictate of the Spirit of God. And such has been the Temper of the present Times, that Enthusiasm has made large Advances amongst us.

Add to this also, the Revival of that Doctrine which teacheth that Grace is *irresistible* ; and which, though the Persons who maintain this Opinion, may not be sensible of the Consequence ; yet seems evidently to strike at the very Foundation of Religion itself, as it destroys the Agency of Man.

To set this Doctrine therefore in such a Light as may be consistent both with Reason and Religion ; and to vindicate it against the Infidel on one side, who denies and ridicules it ; the Enthusiast on the other, who makes false Pretences to it, or boasts greater Supplies than it warrants ; and also against the false Opinions of Calvinism in Respect to this Doctrine, is the Design of the following Observations, which, I hope, will not appear to be improper in these Times, as this Doctrine has at present each of these kinds of Persons to contend with.—In the following Observations then I have endeavoured, First to point out that Distinction between the Assistances of the Spirit (which is necessary
to

to be observed by every one, who will judge rightly and properly upon this head) its *ordinary*, and *extraordinary* Help, the *Time*, and the *Persons*, to which each of them does belong, and the *End* and *Design* for which each of them was given. For want of duly attending to these Circumstances, the Enthusiast is apt to make his boast of a more than *ordinary* Assistance of the Spirit.—After this I endeavoured to prove the *Possibility* of this Assistance, from Considerations of Reason, and Revelation; and then to establish its *Certainty* from the Authority of the Gospel, which is the revealed Will of God; so that supposing this Doctrine to be contained in the Gospel (which is evidently the Case) and then the Evidence of the Gospel is the Evidence of this Doctrine. These two Points are urged against the Infidel, who denies and ridicules the Doctrine of Divine Assistance.—The next thing I have considered is the following Question: How may any one know that he *has the Spirit*? This was necessary to be enquired into, because these present Times abound with such kind of Persons as talk much of *having the Spirit*, and who have placed the Proof of this, not upon what either Reason or Scripture will teach us, but upon such things as must necessarily lead us into Error, if we pay that Regard to them which such Persons do require. The true
Answer

Answer to this Question is, by his *having the Fruits of the Spirit*, which are the Works of Holiness and Righteousness. To this both Scripture and Reason will direct us. And from hence we may judge with certainty, and without any dangerous Consequence attending it.—Our next Enquiry was concerning the *Manner* of the Spirit's Operations. On this head we are greatly ignorant. And it has not pleased God to inform us particularly of this Matter, because it was not necessary that we should be acquainted with it. If we know enough of it to obtain that end, for which it was bestowed, it is sufficient; and there can, I think, be no Question of this. Our Knowledge in this Respect goes far enough for the Practice of Holiness. And this is the End to be obtained. For it is not our being acquainted with the *Manner* of conveying this Strength to us, but our having this Help really given us (of which we are fully certain from the Promise of God) that enableth us for the Practice of Virtue and Holiness.—But though we know not the precise Manner in which this Help is conveyed to us; yet, I think, we may be very well satisfied that it acts agreeable to the Frame of our Nature, as we are either *rational*, or *free* Beings: For you cannot with Reason suppose that God, who is the Author and Giver of this Assistance, designed by this Help to de-
stroy

stroy those Faculties, which he himself has wrought into our Constitution, and which made us to be what we are, Men! No. This additional Strength was bestowed, to enable us for the Performance of what he required from us. The Man then still preserves his *Reason*, and his *Freedom*, under this Influence: He acts *rationally*, and he acts *freely*. This last Point, the proper Agency of Man, is a Point which I have insisted upon at large, because it lies at the very Foundation of Religion, and without it Religion cannot subsist. And if we admit the proper Agency of Man, and that the Grace of God may be resisted, a Consequence will arise from hence that is not very agreeable to the Calvinistical Scheme of Religion; I mean, that we may lose the Grace of God. He that is now in the Favour of God may hereafter, by a bad Use of his Freedom, become an Object of his Displeasure, and perish finally. For if a Man is indeed a free Agent; and if he can abuse this Freedom in some Instances, it will be hard to assign a Reason why he cannot do it in others. And if he can indeed resist the Spirit of God in some Cases, why should he not be able to do it in others? And upon this Supposition, what can prevent his resisting it so much as to lose it utterly? For this must be expected, if he continues in his resistance; and there is nothing which I can

a

perceive

perceive that renders it impossible for him to do so.—Allow then the proper Freedom of Man ; allow also that it is possible for him to resist the Grace of God ; and then it follows that the Doctrine which maintains once in Grace, always in Grace, will be intirely false. The Use of this Inference is to teach us Humility, and Vigilance : It speaks the Language of the Apostle, *Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed, lest he fall.*

The last Question which I considered on this Subject respects the *Persons* to whom this Assistance is offered : And the Answer which I have given is, all to whom the Gospel is preached. Some indeed are for confining this Assistance to a certain select Number of those, who are called to the Profession of the Gospel, and exclude all other Persons from the Benefits of this Privilege. And thus whilst they think to magnify the Mercy of God toward a few particular Favourites ; they do most certainly lessen it toward the generality of Christians. A Doctrine this which does not seem to breathe the Spirit of the Gospel ; or to be agreeable to the Attributes of its Divine Author, whose Mercy is over all his Works, and who is not a Respector of Persons.

It

It is observable that many of the Enthusiasts of this Age pretend to plead the Doctrines, and Services of our Church, as a Support of their extravagant Notions. But as these Persons misapply the Holy Scriptures upon this Occasion, so do they likewise the Doctrines and Services of our Church. Read her Doctrines, and they are agreeable to Religion and Reason. Examine her Services, and you will find them suited to that Piety and Devotion which is solid, grave, rational; not filled with the Flights of Enthusiasm, and with I know not what rapturous Expressions; but breathing that Spirit of Piety, which, though warm, is yet even and sedate, not exhausting itself in some extraordinary Flights of Passion, but continuing on the sacred Flame of a manly, and a sober Devotion. In short, not filling us with Transports of Imagination only, but requiring even in our Prayers the sober Use of our Understanding. Such are the Services of our Church. In vain therefore does Enthusiasm plead them for its Defence. The Enthusiast may indeed misunderstand, and misapply some few of her Expressions, as he does those of Scripture; but then he takes them in a Sense which they were not intended to convey; and some of which Expressions, (though by the Alteration of Language they may be subject to be misunderstood) yet were

never designed to teach the Doctrines, in Defence of which such Persons have applied them. In the following Observations then I have endeavoured to give the true Sense of as many such Expressions as were connected with my Subject, and to vindicate them from the Charge of Enthusiasm.

This Plea from the Doctrines of our Church has been also urged by those who maintain the Principles of Calvinism. Our Church is by these Persons supposed to be Calvinistical, and to teach those Doctrines. And amongst the Teachers of our Church, they who do not favour these Opinions, are supposed to subscribe to Articles which they do not believe; and to profess teaching those Doctrines to which they themselves cannot assent. This indeed is an heavy Charge, for it implies gross Hypocrisy. A Charge therefore which ought to be well founded, and supported; but which, I think, has not as yet been made good, nor indeed ever can be. There have been Attempts enough to prove that our Church is Calvinistical in her Doctrines, but without Success. And there has been enough said by many eminent Men, which prove the contrary. And though this Pretence of the Calvinists may deceive such, as will not be at the Pains to examine this Matter, yet, I think, it will deceive few beside.

beside. With regard to the Subject of the following Observations it is, I think, plain enough that our Church is not inclined to Calvinism. Her Sentiments, as upon this Head, so likewise upon others, seem to be very opposite to these Doctrines. She has no where told us that we cannot co-operate with the Grace of God.—She has not taught that Grace is irresistible.—That it is offered but to some select Professors of the Gospel only.—And that it is impossible, after you have once received this Gift of God, to fall so as to perish. Such indeed are the Sentiments of some amongst us; but they are not such as our Church has taught any of her Children: But she has taught many Things, (some of which I have taken Notice of, and others might be enlarged upon, did my designed Brevity permit) which evidently subvert these Notions. Thus far have I spoke on this Subject, to vindicate my Brethren of our Church from gross Hypocrisy, with which Persons, of different Sentiments, are too apt to charge us; and by this Means to lessen us in the Esteem of those committed to our Care; and thus prevent our doing that Good amongst our People, which we might otherwise hope to effect.

It is not for me to determine how far I have succeeded in the Design of the following
Observa-

Observations. If I have set any Point in a clearer Light, or illustrated its Truth, it will answer the End for which I undertook it; and I shall have no Reason to complain of Labouring to no Purpose: But of this the World must judge. If I have advanced any thing inconsistent either with Religion or Reason, or with the Doctrines of our own Church (which I believe to be founded both upon Reason and Religion) I could wish it unsaid, and should be glad if any Friend would set me right. I submit therefore whatever I have said to the Judgment of Mankind in general; and more especially of those amongst us, to whose Care the Instruction of others in Religion is committed; but most of all, to our Ecclesiastical Governors, whose more especial Business it is, to see that false Doctrines be not published amongst those committed to their Care.



T H E

C O N T E N T S.

THE Assistance of the Holy Spirit, either Ordinary or Extraordinary, Page 2.

The Design of the Extraordinary, Page 3.

The Design of the Ordinary, Page 4.

The Possibility of giving this Assistance, Page 8.

The Certainty of it, Page 10.

The best Method of judging when we have this Assistance, Page 11, &c.

The Manner of its Operation, though greatly unknown, yet agreeable to the proper Agency and Freedom of Man, Page 19, &c.

The Persons to whom this Assistance is offered, Page 30, &c.

Three Practical Inferences, Page 33, &c.

T H E
C O N T E N T S

Lately Published,

(By the same A U T H O R)

I. An ESSAY on Preaching CHRIST,
Second Edition.

II. A LETTER to the Rev. Mr. JONES.



OBSERVATIONS

ON THE Assistance of the SPIRIT.

THE Assistance of the Holy Spirit is one of the greatest Blessings and most principal Doctrines of the Christian Dispensation. It is therefore a Point of some Importance to have right Notions of this Article of our Religion. The Disputes indeed upon this Head have been so many, so warmly persisted in, and so long continued, that the Truth seems to be much obscured, and very difficult to be known. But notwithstanding this Perplexity, in which the contending Parties have involved this Article, yet the Doctrine of this Divine Assistance is clearly enough pointed out to us in Holy Writ, as far at least as it is necessary for us to be acquainted with it.

I shall therefore endeavour, by the Blessing of God, to point out in the clearest Manner I am able (considering the many Disputes which have been raised on this Head) the Truth with respect to this Article of our Religion. And that I may do it the better, I shall begin with observing that the *Operations* of the Holy Spirit are commonly divided into two Sorts; the one is called the *extraordinary* and *miraculous*, the other *ordinary*, and is necessary for the Practice of Christian Holiness. This is a very useful Distinction, and ought carefully to be observed by us; and indeed was it so, it would preserve us from many Errors, into which Enthusiasm is apt to lead us, and with which the present Age so much abounds.

To begin then with the *extraordinary* and *miraculous* Operations of the Spirit. By these the first Teachers of Christianity were instructed both in the *Doctrines*, and the *Precepts* of the Gospel, and were thus enabled to teach Men their Duty: By these also were they endued with the Power of working *Miracles* and *mighty Deeds*, whereby they proved that their Commission was *Divine*, and in Consequence of this, that which they taught was true, and carried with it the *Sanction* of *Heaven*.

Now

Now when those *Doctrines* and *Precepts*, which were thus necessary to be known, had been fully revealed; and when also those *Proofs* from *Miracles* and the like, which were necessary for the Confirmation of these things to Mankind, had been sufficiently wrought, then these *extraordinary* Operations might justly cease, as being now no longer necessary.—Accordingly this was the very Case; the Holy Spirit directed these Persons in what they should teach the World; and to prove that he did thus direct them, he enabled them to perform such things as were an evident Token of God's being with them, and to gave them that Authority and Credit amongst Men, which taught them to acknowledge their Divine Commission, and to believe in, and submit to, the *Doctrines* and *Precepts* which they taught. But when the great Rule of Christian Knowledge and Duty was fully compleated, and those *Proofs* had been given, which were necessary to confirm what was therein contained, then he withdrew as that *immediate* and *extraordinary Inspiration* which was necessary to compleat this Rule, so likewise those *extraordinary* and *miraculous Powers* (which had been proper for confirming these things) as being now no longer requisite. These then were the Privileges of Christianity in its Infant State only; and I think that we have no Reason to complain because such

things are not to be seen in our Days, for had they been continued down to these Times, as they would have been more common, so would they, in Proportion to this, have lost of their Weight and Force with us. And forasmuch as the Christian Religion, when once proved to be true by these Means, must always remain so, without the Continuance of these Miracles, they would therefore have been unnecessary.

But as to the ordinary Operations of the Holy Spirit, these are the Privileges of Christians in all Ages, and are given, as is evident from Holy Writ, to effect a Change of our Affections and our Practice, from the Love and Practice of Sin, to that of Holiness and Righteousness; which Change is, in the Phrase of our Religion, pointed out to us under those figurative Expressions of *being born again*, of *dying to Sin*, and *living to Righteousness*, of *Renovation*, of *being born of the Spirit*, and such like, and by a Word more easily understood, I mean *Repentance*; and this Change in our Natures, is that *sealing of the Spirit* which St. Paul speaks of *unto the Day of Redemption*, or our full and perfect Deliverance from Sin and Death, to the Enjoyment of Glory and Happiness at the Day of Judgment: It is that Mark by which we are known to be the Children of God in
this

this Life, and that Qualification by which we are prepared for Happiness in the next.— Now forasmuch as this Love and Practice of Holiness is required of all Christians, not only of those who lived in the *primitive* Ages of our Religion, but of all those likewise who shall *ever* come to the Knowledge of the Gospel, even to the End of the World; these *ordinary* Operations therefore of the Holy Spirit are necessary, are promised, and will be continued to all, even to the End of the World.

Now God's bestowing upon us this *super-natural* Assistance, evidently supposeth that we stand in need of it; that we are unable, of ourselves, to perform that Obedience to his Laws which he has required of us; for it does not appear to be consistent with the Wisdom of the Deity to give this additional Strength, was it unnecessary and superfluous. If then you suppose, that the present Powers of Nature are sufficient of themselves for the Purposes of Holiness, you will not easily perceive the Wisdom of God, in imparting unto us this further Help of his Spirit: But if you are satisfied that Nature, in its present Condition, is too weak for the Practice of these Things, you will not only see the Wisdom, but you will also have the greatest Reason to adore the Goodness of that God, who came

to your Assistance by his Spirit, when you could by no means help yourself.—Our Religion then, you may observe, does evidently suppose the *Weakness* and *Corruption* of the Human Nature; and to supply us with Strength in this our *Weakness*, and to enable us to recover that *Purity* from whence we have fallen, this spiritual Assistance was afforded us.—That our Nature, in its present State, is indeed sadly *weakened* and *corrupted*, is not only taught us by Religion, but it is also evident in Fact. Consult but your own Experience, and what you perceive within yourself, and you will be convinced of this Point. Do but observe how weak and obscure your Reason; how unable your Conscience is to maintain that *Sovereignty* and *Dominion* over your other moral Powers, for which God designed it; how unruly your Appetites and Passions, how apt to fix themselves upon unlawful, and how averse to proper objects! If this be the present State of our Nature, and that it is I think Experience cries aloud, the Consequence is, that the Human Nature is depraved since its original Constitution; because it cannot well be supposed that God, who is a Being of the greatest Purity and Holiness, would have created us in this manner, *with this Law in our Members warring against the Law of our Minds, and bringing us into Captivity unto the Law*
of

of Sin which is in our Members, Rom. vii. 23.
 But tho' indeed Reason and Experience, as well as our Religion, may teach us the Fact, that we are corrupted; and from hence Reason as well as Revelation may conclude that it is God that must *work in us both to will and to do* what is good; yet it is Revelation only which can discover to us the Origin, and Fountain, from whence this Corruption flowed upon Mankind; the Corruption of our first Parents by their Transgression of the Law of God.—Conscious then of your own Weakness, and Degeneracy, you will be glad to accept of, and thankful to the Mercy of God for, this Blessing of the Divine Assistance.—This seems evidently to be our Case. We could never expect Happiness from an Holy and Righteous God, without being ourselves first Holy; and Holy we could never have been, on Account of the Degeneracy of our Nature, had not the Spirit of God been given for our Aid and Assistance. Now forasmuch as Christ Jesus, the great Author of our Religion, came into the World to obtain for us the Pardon of our Sins, and eternal Happiness, he has therefore obtained for us whatever means were necessary to this end; and therefore he has procured for us the Assistance of the Holy Spirit to qualify us for such great Blessings, that our Natures being renewed, and purified by Divine Grace,
 we

we might through his Merits be meet Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Heaven. From hence then the *Necessity* of Divine Grace is proved.

As to the *Possibility* of giving us this Spiritual Assistance for our Recovery to the Practice of Holiness, there is no Person, who will admit the Gospel to be a Revelation from Almighty God, can by any Means doubt of it, for the Gospel evidently supposeth that this Help will be given; and it cannot be thought that God, from whom our Religion is in this Case allowed to have come, can promise to do what is impossible for him to perform.—Admit then the Truth of Christianity, and you must necessarily admit also the *Possibility* of giving this Spiritual Assistance. The Evidence then of our Religion is also an Evidence of the *Possibility* of the Thing; and it is for those Persons, who admit the Evidence of Christianity, that this Tract is chiefly intended. Men of *Sense* and *Spirit*, as the Infidels of this Age would be thought to be, may question its *Possibility*, because they conceive not the manner in which it may be conveyed; a kind of Objection this, which Men are seldom so weak as to urge in any Case but that of Religion: but they must make use of what Objections they can find. If these Persons therefore would
 prove,

prove, that God can do nothing but what they can fully conceive the Manner of his doing, this Objection would be allowed; it is otherwise altogether useless and ridiculous: and whoever will attempt to prove this, must argue against the plainest and most evident Facts, and what every Sense he hath, as well as his Reason, must notoriously contradict. But consider further, in Answer to this Objection, that the Being, who is to bestow this Help upon us, is no other than that very Being who at first gave us Existence, and consequently all these Powers, whether *natural* or *moral*, that we possess. Suppose then our moral Faculties to be at any Time *weakened* or *corrupted*, can you think it impossible for *Him*, who at first made us, to restore them to their original Strength and Purity? No Reason can be assigned, why the one should be impossible, any more than the other; and therefore it may justly be concluded, that that Being, who has done the one, may, if he please, perform the other. *He*, who at first gave us these *moral Powers*, endued us with Strength and Innocence, may, when they are weakened and depraved, restore them to their primitive Strength and Purity.—But suppose that in recovering of us to this our original State *He* should not effect it all at once, and on a sudden, by an Act of his Almighty Power, but by Degrees, and by requiring our Con-

C

currence

currence with this supernatural Assistance in order to obtain this End : This gradual Method carries with it no Appearance of an Impossibility, but is very agreeable to the present State of Mankind, which is that of *Probation* and *Trial*, and is indeed a proper Exercise of our Virtue.—Now this is the very thing that God doth for us, by giving us the Help of his Grace and Holy Spirit. Our Nature is at present weakened and corrupted; our *Passions* have got the Ascendancy over our other moral Powers, *Reason* and *Conscience*, to which, by the Will of God, they ought to be subservient : But the Divine Being, by this Assistance of his *Grace* and *Holy Spirit*, which conveys a fresh and additional Strength to us, enableth us to check this Unruliness of our *Passions*, and to regain to our *Reason* and *Conscience* their *primitive* Power and Authority, and so by Degrees to recover that *lost Image* of *Purity* and *Holiness*, which was the *original Character* of our Nature.

But suppose the *Possibility* of giving this Help, and of recovering us to our original Condition, yet this will be but of small Advantage, unless we can prove its *Certainty*. It is not sufficient that we know that God is able to do this, but we must also know that he is willing to do it. If then you
enquire

enquire after the Will of God in this Respect, search the Gospel of Christ, which contains the revealed Will of God to Mankind. In these sacred Pages you will find the Promise, and Certainty of this Assistance, which teach this Doctrine in those Passages, in which it is said that *we are led by the Spirit*, that *by the Spirit we mortify the Deeds of the Body or the Flesh*, that *we are born of*, and *sanctified by the Spirit*, and such like. Hence also the Works of Holiness are called the *Fruits of the Spirit*, because it is by this Assistance that we are enabled to bring them forth. From these, and such like Passages, you may learn the *Certainty* of this Divine Help.

It may not be thought an improper Question to ask in these Days, how may any one know that he *has the Spirit*? And to this I answer, "by his Life and Conversation." The End and Design of giving us this spiritual Assistance was to enable us for the Practice of Christian Holiness, or Obedience to the Gospel of Christ. Do you then live as it becometh the Gospel? Do you avoid those things which it has forbidden, and perform those things which it has commanded? If this be your case, you may rest assured you *have the Spirit* in that Manner, which is required of us in these present Times; you are indeed influenced thereby, because without

this spiritual Help you could not do these things; and the more perfect you are in complying with them, the more are you influenced by the Holy Spirit : And this is true, notwithstanding you do not perceive within yourself all those *strong Emotions* of Mind, and have not your *Passions*, your *Hopes* and *Fears*, raised in so *boisterous* a Manner as some talk of, and which certainly may, and often do, arise from a very different Cause, than the Influence of the Holy Spirit.—If then you *mortify the Deeds of the Body*, as St. Paul expresseth it, it is *through the Spirit*. If you are really *good, righteous, and walk according to Truth*, i.e. the Gospel, you *have the Spirit*, because you have the *Fruit of the Spirit*, which the Apostle tells you is in all *Goodness, Righteousness, and Truth* : In short, if you lead an Holy and Christian Life, you *have the Spirit*, you *are led by the Spirit*, the *Spirit of God dwelleth in you*, you *are sanctified by the Spirit*, you *walk in the Spirit*, which Expressions, and such like of Holy Writ, do imply that the Spirit of God does really assist you for, and that you comply with this Assistance to the Purposes of Christian Holiness.—But if on the contrary you live unworthy of the Gospel, if you do not frame your Practice according to the Laws of Christ, but indulge your Vices, you may be as much assured (notwithstanding any Pretensions to the

the contrary) you *have not the Spirit* to any real Advantage ; and that however the Spirit of God may sometimes put good Thoughts into your Mind, and is ready to assist you, yet that you resist *His* Influence, and will not suffer it, as it ought, to bring you to the Practice of Holiness; for as the Apostle observes, Gal. v. *Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the Lusts of the Flesh.* From whence it is evident that whoever does *fulfill the Lusts of the Flesh*, does not *walk in the Spirit*.*

Some there are who seem to have set up a very different Rule from this, whereby they determine that they have the Spirit, a kind of *sensible Feelings, rapturous Emotions of Mind, and a warm Glow of Spirit.* Hence it has often happen'd, that Persons who have been affected in this manner, have concluded that they have had the Spirit of ♥ Truth ; and that others, differently affected, have supposed that the Spirit of God has indeed forsaken them, and by these means have been driven into great Despondency of Mind : But for as much

* This is an Answer to the Question in general, whether we are influenced by the Holy Spirit ; and this, in common at least, is all that is necessary for us to know : But if you will descend to Particulars, and ask whether you was assisted by the Holy Spirit in doing such a *particular* Action or not, the Answer is not so easy, but will often be attended with no small Difficulty. For a Solution of this Point, I refer to a Letter sent by me to the Rev. Mr. Jones, Page 34, &c.

much as these Things do in general arise from an heated Imagination, from a warm Fancy, and particular State of the Animal Spirits, and depend greatly on the Temperature of the Body, they must be very improper Marks to judge by in this Case; and further, these are Things which the Wicked may, and often do perceive, and which the good Christian, tho' indeed actuated by Divine Grace, may not be acquainted with. That this is Truth, Experience will prove to us; moreover, these are such Marks as the Scriptures have no where pointed out to us, such as Reason does not teach us, such as if admitted to be an Evidence of our having the Spirit, will prove the Directions of the Spirit very often to be contradictory to each other, and will lead into the most fatal Errors. From hence it happens, that all Enthusiasts whatever, be their Notions as opposite to each other as Light and Darkness, do yet talk in this strain; and set forth their wild Opinions as the Doctrines of the Spirit, because at this time they have this *Warmth* of *Fancy* and *Imagination*, or as they tell you sometimes, because they * *feel the Spirit*. — But does not our Church talk in the same Language on this Point? Does she not in her
17th

* Expressions of this kind, I mean of *feeling the Spirit*, may be seen in Mr. *Whitfield's* Journals.

17th Article say, *Such as feel in themselves the Working of the Spirit of Christ?* Very true; and it may be allowed, that if the Article had said nothing more than *such as feel in themselves the Working of the Spirit of Christ*, the Expression would have been obscure, and indeed improper, as it might serve to lead Men into wrong Opinions; but read on and you will see what the Article means: the whole Passage stands thus, *Such as feel in themselves the Working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the Works of the flesh, and their earthly members, and drawing up their Mind to high and heavenly Things.* This clears up the Sense of the Expression, and points out to us what is meant by the *Working of the Spirit*, in the Words that follow, *mortifying the Works of the Flesh, &c.* And as this Change in our Affections cannot be produced in us, without our being conscious thereof, this will teach us how to understand the Word *feel*, which implies the same as to be *conscious of*, or to *perceive* this Influence of the Spirit. To confirm this Observation, consider also the same Article as it was established in *Latin*, at the same Time, and by the same Authority, which may be rendered literally in this manner, "Who perceive within themselves the Power of the Spirit of Christ," *qui sentiunt in se vim spiritus Christi.* To *perceive* then within ourselves the Power of the Spirit of Christ,

Christ, is an Expression equivalent to *feeling* within ourselves the working of the Spirit of Christ; only the *Latin* is less obscure, and less liable to be misunderstood, or misapplied. Ask then this Question, How do we *perceive* within ourselves the Power of the Spirit of Christ, or * *feel* within ourselves the Working

* The Imperfection of Language requires the Use of *Metaphors*; and as long as they are applied properly, and understood in the same Manner, they serve to good Purposes, by conveying many of our Notions to each other, which could not well be done without them in some Cases; and by giving Strength and Beauty to the Expression in many others: But when Metaphors are either misapplied, or misunderstood, and taken in a literal, when they should be considered in a figurative Sense, this must of Necessity produce Error. And as the Subject on which such an Expression is used is more important, the Error will be of worse Consequence. This has been one fruitful Source of Mistakes in all Kinds of Knowledge, as might easily be shewn; but most remarkably so in Religion, into which many false Doctrines have been introduced, as by taking figurative Expressions in a strict and literal Sense, so likewise by an Application of Metaphors upon improper Occasions. This is the very Case of the Expression now before us of *feeling*, and such like, as applied to *spiritual* Things. In its *primary* and *original* Sense it refers to *material* Objects, which the Mind perceives by the Intervention of one of the bodily Senses, the *Touch* or *Feeling*; but by a Metaphor it is applied to *spiritual* and *immaterial* Objects, which the Mind is generally said to *feel* when it perceives, and is conscious of their Presence with, and Influence upon her Faculties; tho' sometimes indeed it is used in a different Sense: Thus in *Acts* xvii. 27. where you have these Words, If happily they might *feel* after him, and find him. The original Expression in this Text seems to be stronger than our Translation, εἰ ἀρα γε ψηλαφήσειαν αὐτον. It is a Metaphor taken from a Person that is either blind, or in the dark, and endeavours

ing of the Spirit of Christ; and then answer from the Words of the Article, " By perceiving it mortifying within us the Works of the Flesh, and our earthly Members, and drawing up our Minds to high and heavenly Things." These Fruits of the Spirit then prove the *Power*, the *Working* or *Operation* of the Spirit within us; and whoever perceives these Fruits of the Spirit in himself, perceives that the Power of the Spirit worketh upon him, because these Fruits cannot be produced without it. Compare what has been urged with what the Homily on *Whitsunday* hath said to this Purpose, and let the Homily explain these Words of the Article. In the Homily you have this Question proposed, " But how shall I know that the Holy Ghost is within me? some Man
D " perchance

deavours to find what he wants, by stretching out his Hand to feel it: And in this Place it signifies the enquiry or search of the Mind after God. Take this Expression in its literal Sense, and you consider God as a corporeal and material Being, for immaterial and spiritual Beings are not Objects of the *touch* or *feeling*, or indeed of any of the Senses. From hence you may perceive the mischievous Consequence of taking this, or any such like Expression, in too strict a Sense; and how dangerous it is to lay such a Stress upon Metaphors, or to misapply them. The present Times have been greatly misled, and sadly deceived by the improper Application and Misunderstanding of this very Metaphor. Men of Sense and Judgment therefore, and such as would wish the World to be undeceived in their Errors, should be cautious how they make use of this, or such like Metaphors, which have been so miserably perverted to the Support of Error and Falshood in Religion.

“ perchance will say.” Observe now the
 Answer: “ Forsooth as the Tree is known
 “ by his Fruit, so is also the Holy Ghost. The
 “ Fruits of the Holy Ghost (according to the
 “ Mind of St. Paul) are these: Love, Joy,
 “ Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Good-
 “ ness, Faithfulness, Meekness, Temperance,
 “ &c. Contrariwise, the Deeds of the Flesh
 “ are these: Adultery, Fornication, Unclean-
 “ ness, Wantonness, Idolatry, Witchcraft,
 “ Hatred, Debate, Emulation, Wrath, Con-
 “ tention, Sedition, Heresy, Envy, Murther,
 “ Drunkenness, Gluttony, and such like.
 “ Here is now that Glass wherein thou must
 “ behold thyself, and discern whether thou
 “ have the Holy Ghost within thee, or the
 “ Spirit of the Flesh: If thou see that thy
 “ Works be virtuous and good, consonant
 “ to the prescript Rule of God’s Word, sa-
 “ vouring and tasting not of the Flesh, but
 “ of the Spirit, then assure thyself that thou
 “ art endued with the Holy Ghost; other-
 “ wise in thinking well of thyself thou dost
 “ nothing else but deceive thyself.”—The
 Homily, you perceive, does not talk of *sensi-
 ble Feelings, rapturous Emotions, or a sudden
 and warm Glow of the Spirits*; but it sends
 you to the most solid Proof, the Fruits of the
 Spirit, and hath so fully and clearly stated
 this Point, and also given the Sense of our
 Church upon this Question, that there can
 be

be no Reason for me to dwell any longer upon this head.

As to the *Manner* in which the Spirit of God operates upon our Spirits, and the *Method* by which he conveys Light to the Understanding, and Strength to the Will, that we may both perceive and perform our Duty the better, it is indeed a Point with which we are unacquainted. God has not thought fit to inform us of this Thing, and therefore it is not necessary for us to know it. And further, we can very well perform that Obedience to the Laws of God, for which this Assistance was given us, without this Knowledge, and therefore it is unnecessary on this Account also. Our blessed Lord has compared the Operation of the Spirit to the Wind, of which he says, *we know not whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth*, and then adds, *so is every one that is born of the Spirit*. Sufficient it is for us, that we are certain of this Assistance from the Promise of that God who cannot deceive us; and that the Spirit helpeth us, from that Power we find ourselves endued with (and which Nature affords not) of mortifying the Flesh, and bringing forth the Fruits of the Spirit. As then the Effects of the Wind prove the Certainty of its blowing, so do the Fruits of the Spirit prove the Certainty of his Assistance. Add to this ano-

ther Consideration, that the same Difficulty, which attends the Operation of the Holy Spirit upon our Minds, doth attend also the Operations of our own Spirits upon our own Bodies. *How* and *which way* our Spirits move and operate upon our Bodies, and make them exert their several Powers and Offices, is altogether as difficult to conceive as the Operations of God's Spirit upon our Minds. But || tho' we know not the precise Manner in which this spiritual Strength is conveyed to, and acts upon our Faculties, yet of this I think we may be certain, that the Spirit operates upon us agreeably to the Frame of our Natures; for this spiritual Help was not given to *subvert* and *destroy*, but to *assist* the Powers of our Nature: Now as the Nature of Man is that of a Being endued with a Principle of Reason, as the superior Faculty, and with a Variety of *Passions*, which are inferior to, and ought to be under the Government of *Reason*; the Spirit of God therefore in his Operations does not *supersede* or *destroy* the Use of our *Reason*, but requires the *Exercise* thereof. He does not affect our Passions by filling us with *imaginary* and *groundless* Hopes and Fears; but whenever he rouseth either our Hopes,

|| Our Church, in its Homily on *Whitsunday*, speaking of the Office of the Holy Ghost to sanctify and regenerate, says of it, "the more it is *hid from our Understanding*, the more it ought to move all Men to wonder at the *secret* and mighty Working of God's Holy Spirit that is within us."

Hopes, or our Fears, there is some Reason for it, which our Understanding perceives, and enforces upon our Passions.—But as Man is endued with a Principle of Reason, so is he likewise a Being that is accountable for his Actions, and consequently a Being who doth in some Degree, at least, partake of Freedom; who therefore may indeed be persuaded, but ought not, nay without Violence to his Nature, cannot be forced to the Practice of Holiness. This Assistance then does not destroy, but requires our *Concurrence* therewith, in order to produce that end, for which it was designed. It indeed affords us *sufficient* Help, but it does not *compel* us to be Holy. Agreeable to this Notion, St. *Paul* hath required of us to *work out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling*; and for this very Reason, *for or because it is God that worketh in us both to Will, and to do of His good Pleasure*. Though then it is true, that God, by his Grace, doth enable us both to *Will*, and to *do* what is good, that we may obtain this our Salvation; yet Man *himself* must work in this Case, and to this very Duty the Apostle exhorteth him.—But notwithstanding this Inference deduced by St. *Paul* from the Consideration of Divine Assistance; yet there have not been wanting those Persons, who have inferred just the contrary: who suppose that, because God *worketh in us both to will and to do*, God therefore

therefore does the whole so entirely, that *we* ourselves do *nothing* in our Conversion from Sin, and in the Practice of Christian Holiness—that his Grace acts irresistibly upon us—that we are merely *passive* under it—and that there is no Need at all of *our Concurrence*. But that *we ourselves* do properly *act* in this our Conversion from Sin, and in the Practice of Holiness—that the Grace of God is not thus *irresistible*, and *we ourselves* merely *passive*; but that we ought to *accept* of, and can likewise *concur* with this Assistance of God, is, I think, evident to every one, who will but impartially consult his own Experience; and what he perceives within himself in doing any good thing. He must be Conscious that his own Faculties *concur*, and are properly exerted in producing this Action; and that without any *Force*, or *Violence* upon them, which compells them to exert themselves. Secondly, it is evident from this Consideration, that *Man* is *properly* an *Object of Rewards*, if he does well. This our Religion evidently supposeth: But he could not be a *proper Object of Reward*, if the Grace of God acted *irresistibly* upon him; or if the virtuous Action was entirely the Action of *Divine Grace*, and not the Action of the *Man*. In this Case the *Man* would be no more than an *Instrument* of Action. And as the Action would not be *his own*, so could he not be a *proper Object of Reward*.

Reward. Man therefore being supposed by our Religion a *proper Object* of Reward (for the Rewards in Scripture are promised to *Man himself*) he must be supposed likewise to be *properly* an *Agent* in the virtuous Action : — That Man is *properly* an *Agent* in *Vice*, because the Punishment is threatened to *Man* if he be vicious, is a Consequence which every one will admit. That Man is *properly* an *Agent* in *Virtue*, because the Reward is promised to *him* if he be virtuous, is an Argument which is founded upon the same Kind of Reasoning; and it will hold good in both Cases, or neither. If it will prove *Man* to be an *Agent* in *Vice*, it will also prove *him* to be an *Agent* in *Virtue*; and if it cannot prove *him* to be an *Agent* in *Virtue*, it cannot prove *him* to be an *Agent* in *Vice*. — The Gospel then, supposing *Man* to be a *proper Subject* of Religion, and a *proper Object* of Reward if he lives virtuously, as well as a *proper Object* of Punishment if he lives wickedly, supposeth him to be *properly* an *Agent* both in *Virtue* and in *Vice*; and though our Religion doth afford him a supernatural Assistance to enable him for the Practice of Holiness; yet this doth not *destroy*, but only *assist* the *Agency* of Man, for notwithstanding this Assistance, it yet supposeth him a *proper Object* of Reward for his Virtue. Add to this another Consideration also, that as it is *Man himself* who is required to abstain
from

from Vice, so is it likewise *Man himself* who is commanded to practise Virtue, and to do what is good and holy. This evidently supposeth *Man* to be an *Agent*, as in the Practice of *Vice*, so likewise in the Practice of *Virtue* and *Holiness*. And it seems utterly impossible to give any reasonable Account how any moral Precepts can be addressed to *Man* on any other Supposition than the *true and proper Agency* of *Man*, with respect both to *Vice* and *Virtue*: In short, this seems to be the true State of the Point now before us; that tho' the Divine Grace itself must strictly be said to be *solely* from God, as he alone is the Giver thereof, yet no good Action can with any Propriety be said to be *solely* from him; when yet it must, if the Grace of God acted *irresistibly*, or destroyed the *Agency* of *Man*; and the Reason is this, because there are two Parties concerned in this Case, the Grace of God *prevents* that we may have a good Will, and *works together with us* when we have this good Will * (See Article x.) The Man accepts of this *preventing* and *assisting* Grace of God, and by making use of his own Faculties, assisted by this additional Help of the Spirit, *he*;

* Wherefore we have no Power to do good Works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the Grace of God, by Christ *preventing* us that we may have a good Will, and *working with us* when we have that good Will.

he, the *Man*, produces the good Action. The Action therefore is properly the Action of the *Man*, because it is by *his* Acceptance, and Use of this Assistance, together with the Exercise of *his own Faculties*, that the Action is produced. The Glory of it ought indeed to be attributed unto God, because it is by the Assistance of God that he is enabled to perform it; though Man is not without his Honour in this Case, but in an inferior Degree, because *he* makes a good Use of this Divine Help.—In this Manner is St. *Paul* to be understood, when he tells us that *he* laboured more abundantly than they all, which clearly shews that the Labour was properly *his own*; but yet, conscious that it was by the Grace of God that he was enabled thus to labour, he adds, yet not *I*, but the *Grace of God* that is in me; by which he does not Mean that he himself did not properly labour, which he had before asserted; but this was spoken that he might give the Glory of these his Labours unto God, who strengthened him for that Purpose.—But thirdly, this Point is clear and evident from many plain and express Passages of Holy Writ, in which Men are condemned for, or warned against *resisting, quenching, grieving, and doing Despite* to the Holy Spirit.—The Sum then of this Point amounts to this: That without the Spirit of God we can indeed neither will, nor do what

is good, but that we can do all Things required of us through Christ, that strengtheneth us by his Spirit, *Philippians* iv. 13. but then be it observed, that this Assistance doth not destroy the Use of, but only giveth fresh and greater Power to those Faculties of Action within us; and thus enableth us to exert ourselves in such a Manner, as may be attended with Success, if we are not wanting to ourselves. But are we not often said in the Phrase of Scripture to be *created* in Christ Jesus unto good Works, *Ephesians* ii. 10. to be *born* of God, and to be *born* of the Spirit? Very true.—But what can a Man do towards his own *Creation* or *Birth*? To this I answer, he can do nothing towards his *natural* Birth or Creation; and the Reason is this, because what has no Existence, cannot be supposed to act without a direct Contradiction; because this would be the same, as to suppose Man existing, and not existing at the same Time: But if because Man can do nothing towards his *natural* Birth and Creation, you infer that he can do nothing towards his *spiritual* Birth and Creation; you must first prove that the Parallel between the *natural* and *spiritual* Birth and Creation holds strictly true, in all Circumstances, or else this Consequence will be denied.—The Design of these, and such like Metaphors, made use of upon this occasion, was to express the Greatness

ness of the Change, that Man is hereby, *as it were*, created a-new, and born a-new, having new Inclinations, and a new Practice. Besides, if you suppose that the various Metaphors, by which this Change is expressed, are to be taken in this strict and literal Sense, and if you will pursue the Allusion as far as your Fancy may direct, the certain Consequence will be this, that you will find many of these Metaphors to be inconsistent with each other, as might easily be shewn.— Another bad Consequence which will attend this Method of Interpretation is, that it makes these *figurative* Expressions inconsistent also with other plain Texts of Holy Writ, for to whom I pray is the command given; and who are supposed in Holy Writ to repent, but *Men* themselves? Now Repentance is an Expression equivalent to those other figurative ones. Repent *ye*, and believe the Gospel, *Mark* i. 15. And they preached that *Men* should repent, *vi.* 12. and *Luke* xiii. 3. Except *ye* repent. *Acts* iii. 19. Repent *ye* therefore, and xvii. 30. commandeth all *Men* every where to repent. *Men* therefore are commanded, and they *themselves* are supposed to repent; and this is the constant Language of the sacred Pages. Again, who is supposed by the Prophet *to turn away from his Wickedness*? *The wicked Man*. When the *wicked Man*, &c. *Ezekiel* xviii. 27. Who

are commanded by the Apostle to cleanse their Hands? The *Sinners*; and to purify their Hearts? The *double Minded*, *James iv. 8.* And St. *Paul* requireth us to cleanse ourselves from all Filthiness, &c. *2. Cor. vii. 1.* These and such like Passages therefore do evidently suppose that these are the Actions of *Men themselves*. But as you cannot infer from hence, that there is no Necessity of Divine Assistance to enable us for the Performance of these things; so neither can you infer from those other Passages, which teach the Help, and inculcate the Assistance of God's Spirit, that Man is not properly an Agent, and that these are not properly the Actions of Men. Both the Assistance of Divine Grace, and the Agency of Man, are clearly supposed, and may evidently be proved by the sacred Scriptures, and they are likewise consistent with each other.

The Advocates for *irresistible Grace* do indeed imagine that hereby they advance the Glory of God; but this I apprehend may be much questioned. That such Principles, as overturn the very Foundations of Religion, cannot promote the Glory of God, is I think, an evident Truth; because Religion is the best way to glorify God. That whatever Notions destroy the Agency of Man, do indeed subvert the Foundations of Religion,
is,

is, I think, as plain; for suppose Man not to be an Agent (which this Doctrine does suppose) and it seems an undeniable Consequence, that he cannot be a proper Subject of Religion; because he cannot be a proper Object of any Laws, or of Rewards, or Punishments. And should this be allowed, what is the Consequence, but that neither Christianity, nor indeed any Religion whatever, can be obligatory upon us? This Plea therefore, though indeed it may seem ever so pious, as it appeareth to aim at the Glory of God, and hath all the outward Form and Shew of Humility, and may, by these Means, deceive many well-disposed Persons, yet cannot be admitted, because it is inconsistent with the very Nature of Religion itself; as it supposeth Man not to be an Agent, but a Machine, and Instrument of Action only; and it must, I think, be allowed that no one Part of Religion should be explained in such a Manner, as to contradict the very Nature of that Religion, of which it is supposed to be a Part. I conclude therefore, that *Man is properly an Agent*, and therefore that *the Grace of God is not irresistible.* §

I

§ The Possibility of resisting the Spirit is evidently taught us by our own Church, in Article 16, where you have these Words: *After we have received the Holy Ghost, we may depart from Grace given, and fall into Sin.* But we cannot depart from Grace given, and fall into Sin, without resisting Grace,

I have insisted longer on this Particular than I should otherwise have done, because there are many, in these present Times, who are apt to deny the *Agency* of Man, especially in Virtue, though at the same Time they admit, and contend for the Truth of Religion.

But it may be asked, To whom does this Divine Grace belong? In answer to this, I think it consistent with Reason, with our best Notions of the Attributes of God, and with the Declarations of Holy Writ itself, to suppose that it belongs to all those to whom the Gospel is preached, if they themselves are not in fault.—Consistent with Reason, I say, because it is certainly agreeable to this, to suppose that the Blessings of the Gospel, of which Divine Grace is one, were intended for all those to whom the Gospel was commanded to be preached; for the Gospel would otherwise be, in Appearance and Shew, an Offer of Blessings without any Intention of giving them. Whether this be worthy of the great and benevolent Author of our Religion, or not, judge ye.—Consistent also with our best

Grace, and the Holy Spirit. And also in the Homily, entitled, *Falling from God*, which supposeth that a Man can fall from God finally, and perish, tho' he has been in a State of Grace and Favour with God, and therefore cautions him against it. With this agreeth also, *Suffer us not at our last Hour, for any Pains of Death, to fall from Thee*; which Expression does infer a Reliance of Grace. *Burial Service.*

best Notions of the Attributes of God ; for as much as by these means the Divine Goodness and Mercy (so much enlarged upon in the Gospel) is display'd in a more extensive manner, and shines forth with a much greater Glory.—Consistent also with the Declarations of Holy Writ ; for as much as whosoever rejects the Gospel through Unbelief, or breaks its Laws by a wicked Life, is supposed in Scripture Phrase to *resist*, to *quench*, to *grieve the Holy Spirit* ; which Expressions are utterly inconsistent with the contrary Supposition, that the Assistance of the Spirit is not offer'd to them.

But as a farther Confirmation of this Point, consider what our blessed Lord himself has promised, *Luke xi. Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you ; for every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.* But what is this, you'll say, to the Purpose ? here is no Promise of giving the Spirit to every one. But read on, and you will find that this Passage does indeed refer to this very Gift ; for after our blessed Lord had strengthen'd this Promise, by Considerations drawn from the natural Tenderness, and Affections of earthly Parents towards their Children, in supplying their Wants, he concludes in this following manner,

manner, *How much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?*

Another Consideration which seems to set this Point beyond Dispute, and to prove that the Assistance of the Spirit is indeed offered to every one, is the Doctrine of Universal Redemption; which is clearly taught in Holy Writ, and as strongly asserted by our own Church, in Article xxxi.* For if God doth offer the *End*, it cannot be supposed but that he also offereth the *Means* necessary to obtain this End. And therefore since God offereth Redemption to *All*, he therefore offereth the Assistance of the Spirit unto *All*, to qualify them that they may be Partakers of this Blessing. The Assistance of the Holy Spirit then is the Privilege of every Christian that will but seek it by those Means which God hath appointed, and properly concur therewith when this Help is given; so that if any Person hath it not, the Fault is in himself; he either does not endeavour to obtain it by those Methods which God hath appointed, or else by refusing this Help when offered to him, he has grieved, and so driven this Holy Spirit from him.

Thus

* The offering of Christ once made is that perfect Redemption, Propitiation, and Satisfaction for *all* the Sins of the *whole World*, both *original* and *actual*.

Thus have I endeavour'd to consider this important Article of our Religion, and to give a Solution to most of the material Questions upon this Head, in the clearest Manner I was able, though not so clearly as I could wish. An Inference or two, drawn from some of the preceding Considerations, may not be without some Advantage. And

First, from hence you may judge of those Pretensions, which some have made to larger Communications of the Spirit than other Men; of *immediate* Commissions from Heaven, and Inspirations from God's Spirit, that they are vain and groundless; because the extraordinary Operations of the Holy Spirit were necessary for, and belonged only to the primitive Ages of Christianity. Whatever was necessary to be revealed, was revealed at that time; and whatever Miracles were necessary to be wrought for the Confirmation of these Doctrines, were wrought at that time. And we might, with equal Propriety, claim the Power of working Miracles, as pretend that we are thus *immediately* inspired.* The common Assistance of
F the

* In the Communion Service of our Church, we pray to God that he would cleanse the Thoughts of our Hearts by the *Inspiration* of his Holy Spirit. Now it is evident that the

the Spirit are fully sufficient for us at present, to enable us both to understand, and to perform whatever the Gospel requireth of us, either as to Faith or Practice. And as there is no Necessity of these *extraordinary* Helps, there can be no Reason why they should at present be admitted, unless those Persons who claim them, will give us the same Evidence as the Apostles did, the working of Miracles in Confirmation of them. That many Persons have in these Days talked, and acted in such a Manner, as if they had been thus *extraordinarily* assisted, is much too evident and notorious to want a Proof. Such has been the powerful Influence of Enthusiasm in these Times. But to shew proper Evidence and
Grounds

the *Inspiration* of the Holy Spirit; for which we pray in this Collect, is such as belongs to the *ordinary* Assistances thereof, for it is such an *Inspiration* as *cleanses the Thoughts of our Hearts, that we may perfectly love, and worthily magnify thy, i. e. God's holy Name.* But this is no Encouragement to think of *immediate* Inspiration, for the *ordinary* Graces of the Spirit (and such like) are given in the Use of Means; which our Church, in her General Thanksgiving, calls *the Means of Grace.* Here it might also be observed, that tho' the Word *Inspiration*, at the Time of composing our Liturgy, was applicable both to the *ordinary*, and *extraordinary* Operations of the Spirit, and in the true and proper Sense of the Word may be applied so at present; yet Custom, which altereth the Sense and Meaning of Words, seemeth to have appropriated this Expression to such Operations of the Spirit as are *extraordinary.* And most People in these Days, when any Person talks of being *inspired by the Holy Ghost*, understand it of our having the *extraordinary* Helps of the Spirit. See also the Collect for the 5th Sunday after *Easter.*

Grounds for these Pretensions, is a thing which is yet wanting. But,

Secondly, this Consideration that we stand in the greatest Need of the Divine Assistance, and that God of his Love and Mercy in Christ Jesus, hath actually offered this Help unto us, under the Dispensation of the Gospel, should make us greatly esteem, and set the highest Value upon this our Religion, which appears to be so well suited to relieve the present Wants of Mankind : You need go no further than your own Experience, and what you perceive within yourself, to become sensible of your Weakness and Corruption ; but examine all the Religions in the World besides the Christian, and you will find no Remedy in this your Distress. Thanks then be to God that the Glorious Light of the Gospel of Christ has shone upon us, and by these Means the Assistance of God's Spirit become our Help, and our Privilege. The best way for us to be thankful to God for so great a Blessing is, heartily to accept of, and comply with this Grace of God to all the Purposes of Holiness. As this will be the best Expression of our Gratitude, so will it tend to the Glory of God, and the Benefit of our Souls ; and is the very End and Design for which this Help was bestowed on us. But this brings me to a

Third Inference, which is, That for as much as *All* may now have the Assistance of Divine Grace, we ourselves only shall be to blame, if we live not agreeably to the Gospel of Christ. If any one should plead Weakness, let him consider what Assistance he could wish for preferable to that of God by his Spirit; and as this Grace is fully sufficient for him, he must therefore be altogether without Excuse in his Neglect of an holy Life.—If you doubt of the Certainty of this Assistance, because you conceive not the Manner of conveying it to you; consider that God is able to perform what he in his Wisdom and Goodness has thought fit to promise, tho' you may not conceive the *Manner* in which it is to be done; and that he has Ways and Means enough to fulfill his Promises to us.—If you stay till this Grace of God shall come upon you *irresistibly*, and thus overpower you, and force you to the Ways of Holiness; your Expectations are altogether vain and groundless: God will not offer such a Violence to your Nature. He is indeed always ready to give you what is *sufficient* to your Repentance, and Amendment; but neither Reason, nor Revelation, can make you hope for more. Lay hold then of this Grace of God, which is thus mercifully offer'd *to you,*
and

and let it lead you into the Ways of Holiness as it ought.—In short, and to conclude, Consider seriously, that God of his Mercy in Christ Jesus, under the Gospel Dispensation, hath offered to us the Gift of eternal Life and Happiness. To qualify us for the Enjoyment of this Blessing, it is absolutely necessary (if we do but consider the Nature of this Happiness) that we should be purified from our Corruption; and be renewed after the Image of God, in Righteousness and true Holiness: For this Happiness consists in the Enjoyment of the Presence of God, and all the blessed Effects thereof, amidst the Company of Angels, and the Spirits of Just Men made perfect. And how can you think it possible for the Wicked to have any Relish for, or Pleasure in such Things as these? Add to this another Consideration also, that it is certain and evident from Holy Writ, that *without Holiness no one shall see the Lord*. From hence you may judge of the great Importance and Necessity of Holiness in this Life, in order to our Happiness in the next. To enable us to attain to this Holiness (for which our own Strength was insufficient) the Assistance of God's Spirit is afforded us. If then you are wise for your Salvation, or thankful to God for his Mercies to you, you will gladly accept of this additional Help,
and

and improve it to that great End for which it was given, the Practice of Christian Holiness. And this will bring you to the Enjoyment of Christian Happiness in the Life to come.

F I N I S.



